

# Network News

## Parent Information Network

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### Look What's New!

by Barb Ross

The Parent Information Network has experienced more new changes. We recently bid farewell to Becky Phifer, former PIN Specialist for Cochise, Graham and Greenlee counties. We appreciate all she did for parents and families during her short time in that position.

Welcome to our three new Specialists: Allison Meritt, Teri Rademacher and Kristie Melkers! Allison is the mother of two teenage daughters, one who is visually impaired with a specific learning disability. "I am thrilled to be a part of the Parent Information Network."

Teri is the parent of a young adult with a disability and currently serves as Co-Chair of Arizona's Special Education Advisory Panel. "I am pleased to be a part of the Parent Information Network team and I look forward to working to build collaborative partnerships with the schools and agencies in my two counties."

Kristie has four children, one of whom is a 6-year-old boy with cerebral palsy and autism. "I am passionate about strengthening parent/school partnerships and promoting positive educational outcomes for all of the children."

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### Start the New Year with New Information!

by Tina Swearingen

Take a day to get caught up on IDEA 2004; Mental Health Issues; Dyslexia; Legislative Awareness; Developmental Disabilities; or Spinal Cord Injuries. Below are several events coming up this spring that you may be interested in.

- **February 2<sup>nd</sup>** is "Emerging from the Shadows: Legislative Awareness Day 2006" to be held at the Arizona State Capital Grounds. For more information, see full article in this issue or contact Jason Geroux from the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities at 866-701-5575 or by email at [jason@azgcdd.org](mailto:jason@azgcdd.org).
- **February 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>** is "Catch Them Before They Fail" at the Black Canyon Conference Center in Phoenix. The Arizona Branch of the International Dyslexia Association is holding the Ninth Annual Conference on Dyslexia, presented by Dr. Joseph Torgessen. For further information you can check out their website at [www.dyslexia-az.org](http://www.dyslexia-az.org) or call 480-941-0308.
- **March 10<sup>th</sup>** is "Taking the Mystery out of 2004 IDEA and Regulations" at the Black Canyon Conference Center in Phoenix. The Arizona Council for Exceptional Children and Arizona CASE Law will have a combined conference this year on the newly revised IDEA 2004. For further information call 520-225-6717.
- **April 5<sup>th</sup>** is "NAMI Walks for the Mind of America." This event is to raise awareness of mental illness and to bring the issues to the community at large. For more information, email them at [namiawalks@namiawalks.org](mailto:namiawalks@namiawalks.org).

### Video Review: *What the Silenced Say*

by Sharon Moeller

*What the Silenced Say* by Jonathan Mooney is an experience in alternative learning. Jonathan speaks openly about his experience as a dyslexic and hyperactive student. He summarizes how he moved from feeling "stupid and crazy" to graduating from Brown University with a 4.0 grade average. He openly shares his success stories as well as his horror stories, vividly describing surviving an institution that is obsessed with normalcy. Jonathan speaks passionately about his mother and how she was his greatest advocate-as she understood him without judgment. This personal story is emotionally moving, we must stop teaching children they are broken. He stresses to parents to be your child's advocate, love them for who they are, help them find their passion and do not let anyone take it away. This video is available for check out from the Parent Information Network by contacting Carla Valenzuela at 602-542-3852.

## **Emerging From the Shadows**

by Jason Geroux

Legislative Awareness Day 2006, "Emerging From the Shadows" will be held on February 2, 2006 at the Arizona State Capitol Complex Senate Lawn. The event, which is sponsored by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), has been an annual event since 1988 and is typically attended by more than 250 people. The GCDD extends invitations to all state policy makers and usually sees attendance by 50% of those legislators. Constituents are encouraged to meet with their legislators and discuss issues that are relevant to the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. The GCDD invites the community to the legislative luncheon, provided by Carrabba's Italian Grill.

The mission of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities is to bring together persons with disabilities representing Arizona's cultural diversity, their families and other community members, to protect rights, eliminate barriers, and jointly promote equal opportunities. This is achieved through a philosophy of self-determination with increased options through statewide planning, advocacy, monitoring and community action for public policy change.

The GCDD asks that any and all constituents around the state participate in this event through attendance, volunteering, or by simply making calls to their legislators to discuss the pertinent issues on this year's legislative agenda. Spanish and sign language interpreters will be available at the event, and we ask that requests for special accommodations be made in advance of the event. The GCDD, along with several other organizations, have identified key issues for this legislative session and look forward to partnering with local citizens in each community to educate policymakers on the importance of each issue. For more information regarding these key issues, please contact the Council office at 602-277-4986.

## **"Parent's Perspective" Autism Spectrum Disorder Training**

by Lisa Townsend

Not so very long ago, my sister and I had a conversation on the telephone. It was full of the ins and outs of parenthood – shared commiseration about the things kids do and the ways we attempt to respond to them. However, our conversations tend to take a bit different approach. You see, to quote a poem from a long forgotten author in an undergraduate English class, my sister and I "live in the door between two worlds." We are educators, third grade school teachers, and each the parent of a son with autism. My sister lives on the other side of the country. Although we share similar concerns and needs with regard to our children, each of our communities responds to those needs in their own unique ways.

I shared with my sister my experiences with the Autism Spectrum Disorder Training that I attended this past year,

invited by the school district that my son attends and sponsored by the Arizona Department of Education. The presenters offered a balanced program of current researched based strategies.

The information was presented to address the wide variation of needs exhibited by those with autism including, communication, educational, social/behavioral, etc., along with applications for the broad spectrum of symptoms – from mild to severe. As a parent, I truly felt as though they recognized that each child is unique, and therefore "one size fits all" strategies are rarely successful.

I was particularly impressed that although parents were in the minority, their needs and concerns were given due attention during the training. With trainings such as this one, we can learn to work together as a team to build bridges to the future for children with this often-misunderstood disability, and their families. (*Lisa Townsend is guest contributor from Yuma, Arizona.*)

## **Partnerships Reap Powerful Outcomes!**

by Kristie Melkers

Special education law, advocacy, and due process are terms very familiar to those who parent or teach children with special education needs. The words and the concepts behind them are each powerful and important. The *real* people and the *real* children, who educate, learn, and nurture every day under the wide umbrella of these legal mandates have a vital, personal job to do - come together to connect and build partnerships.

Partnerships are critical and the legislators who created and amended IDEA 2004 recognized this and wrote guidelines for increased parental involvement in their child's special education process. This outreach for parental involvement has spilled over into the general education realms as well. This partnership stuff is powerful! The challenge is to value it, grow it, and maintain it in a realm like special education where partnerships are required from the onset between parties who didn't choose one another, but must work efficiently together to produce an individualized educational program for a child.

Early Conflict Resolution is an important process that has shown promising results in helping educators and parents develop the communication skills they need to build productive partnerships.

The Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education has a wonderful website offering great resources on building partnerships. Their website address is: [www.directionservice.org/cadre](http://www.directionservice.org/cadre). The organization is sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. "Educating Our Children Together: A Sourcebook for Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships" is a great starting point for those interested in learning more.

## IDEA 2004 and Discipline

by Teri Rademacher

With the passage of IDEA 2004, parents have many questions regarding the changes and potential impact on their child with behavioral challenges. What provisions are schools required to follow regarding the suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities? *Network News* would like to highlight some of the provisions of IDEA 2004 and offer strategies for parents to be more proactive in addressing their child's behavioral issues.

Many children have inappropriate behaviors that are part of their disability. These behaviors may make it difficult to learn, cause harm to themselves or others, or isolate a child from his or her peers. Some children have behaviors that they can't control, such as tics for a child with Tourette syndrome or self-harming behaviors for some children with developmental disabilities. Some children may be sad or anxious. Others simply have not learned positive ways to have their needs met. In any of these instances, the behaviors interfere with the children's ability to learn the skills they need to be successful.

We can teach appropriate behavior skills to children! To do so, we need to understand problem behaviors; such as where they occur and what purpose they serve for a child. The process of learning about how children develop problem behaviors is called a **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)**. If we learn about the behaviors and know when and where they are likely to happen, we can plan positive strategies to teach new more appropriate behaviors. These strategies are called positive **Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP)**. Teachers and parents will use the information from an FBA to help a child learn new skills. The goal is to teach children how to manage their own behaviors.

There is a terrific document authored by Dixie Jordan that details the process for conducting a FBA and developing strategies for a positive BIP. The title of the document is "Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Interventions: What Parents Need to Know" and can be requested from the Parent Information Network Specialist (PINS) in your area. The document is number BR22. Excerpts from this document were used in the writing of this article.

The provisions of IDEA 2004 regarding discipline that took affect on July 1, 2005 are outlined in a document made available by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the U. S. Department of Education and can be found in the Parent Information Network Clearinghouse (PINC). This document provides a brief description of nine provisions of the Act that went into effect in July 2005. If you would like a copy of this document, please contact the Parent Information Network Specialist in your region and request document IR04- (Discipline).

## Positive Behavior Support

by Barbra Ross

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an expression that refers to a variety of intervention strategies that are highly individualized, based on scientific principles and practical information, grounded in person-centered values, and designed to prevent the occurrence of challenging behaviors. PBS generally involves instruction to enhance the ability of a child to manage his or her social environment to promote desirable behavior and remove precursors to challenging behaviors. Below are a few strategies for both parents and teachers.

- Shame is an emotion that destroys self-esteem and self-confidence. Find ways to talk with him, ask yourself if your comments will make him feel ashamed. If so, stop! It doesn't matter what he did or how we may justify what we are saying. We are destroying him if we make him feel ashamed.
- Do not focus on the past, even if the past has only been five seconds ago. Focus on what you want him to do now or in the near future. The more you say, "You just did this!" or "Stop it!" will cause him to be defensive, angry and eventually become defiant. Ask for what you want in a kind way. "Please" is a magical word. It won't change his behavior immediately, but it will make important improvement, through trust.
- Praise him. Praise him. Praise him. The emotional impact of a reprimand is much stronger than praise. It takes four to five positive comments just to equal one reprimand.
- Do not insist on good behavior. Give two or three choices, make sure both choices are okay with you. Let the child feel powerful by making his own decisions.
- Identify, teach and model positive strategies that will help limit, control or divert impulses. Skills such as relaxation responses like breathe counting, appropriate venting techniques, and ignoring. Practice specific socially acceptable approaches and behaviors.
- **Don't give up.** It is hard to continually deal with difficult behavior. Take breaks. Have fun with him. Talk with him. Listen to him. Understand him. Work to develop a positive relationship with him.

Strategies taken from PINC documents: BR03-(Reducing Problem Behaviors through Good Academic Management), BR08-(10 Things Parents Can Do for a Child Who Has ADHD), and BR20-(Proactive Approaches to Help Students Control Their Anger). These resources can be accessed directly from our website, [www.ade.state.az.us/ess/pinspals](http://www.ade.state.az.us/ess/pinspals), or you can contact the PIN Specialist in your area for a copy.

## Response to Intervention

by Teri Rademacher

On December 3, 2004, the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was signed into law. With the emphasis being placed on “improving education”, components of the reauthorized law once again strengthen the idea that the regular classroom and special education should work cohesively towards improving outcomes for all students. IDEA 2004 includes a “Special Rule for Eligibility Determination” with regards to Specific Learning Disabilities. Local education agencies (schools) are no longer required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in academic areas when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability. Schools can now use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as a part of the evaluation procedures. This process is called Response to Intervention (RtI).

The RtI model is research-based and requires the use of clear standards, sound instructional practices, and monitored results. As Joanne Phillips, Deputy Associate Superintendent, Exceptional Student Services, at the Arizona Department of Education stated in her recent article in *Special Edition*, “RtI creates a system of steps designed to provide research-based interventions matched to the needs of the student. They are implemented on a prescribed schedule for a specific period of time, much as a doctor would prescribe medication.

Results are monitored continuously and progress mapped. Data are collected and analyzed, and programs modified, based on student-driven data. If the desired progress is not obtained within the timelines set, next step decisions are based on data, rather than subjective opinion.”

Schools get to decide whether they will use the RtI model that has been developed by the Arizona Department of Education. Some schools may decide to keep their existing pre-referral systems commonly called Student Assistance Teams (SAT), Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT), Child Study Teams (CST), etc. There are inherent problems with the use of these pre-referral models, which oftentimes includes the limited collection of valid data. Also, when strategies are implemented to address the identified areas of need, changes to these strategies are generally not made in a systematic way. Consequently, the timelines for this type of pre-referral model are less defined.

Arizona’s RtI plan uses a three-tiered model and is currently being presented to twenty teams (schools) throughout the state. If you would like to learn more about Arizona’s RtI model, you should plan to attend the March 2006 Regional Outreach Training in your area. You can view the schedule and register online at [www.ade.az.gov](http://www.ade.az.gov), then select *Special Education* under *Programs* from the menu on the left side of the homepage. If you do not have online access, please contact the PIN Specialist in your region.

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